

JAPAN CHRISTIAN ACTIVITY NEWS

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14TH NCC GENERAL ASSEMBLY

The 14th General Assembly of the Japan NCC was convened at Ginza Church on March 22 - 23 with more than 100 representatives present. Takeshi Muto was reelected Moderator and Chitose Kishi of the Japan Lutheran Church and Hinsuke Yashiro of the Anglican-Episcopal Church were elected vice-Moderators. Masayuki Sawano of the Japan Baptist Domei (American Baptist-related) was elected General Secretary.

On the second day a motion, to express the Council's whole-hearted welcome to E. Reischauer on his appointment as the United States ambassador to Japan, was unanimously approved. A motion, to express the Council's appreciation to the Ministry of Justice for the Ministry's timely decision to enforce the law prohibiting sale of liquor and tobacco to minors was also approved. It was also decided that Moderator Muto as representative of Japan NCC to New Delhi, would convey the approval of the Japanese Church of the IMC and WCC merger at New Delhi in November.

It was noted that the total number of Believers in the member denominations of the Japan NCC has exceeded 400,000. According to the latest census the figure is 403,514, which is an increase of 24,893 over last year. The largest group is the United Church of Christ in Japan with 180,855 members or 44.7% of the total.

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PAMPHLET ON CHRISTIAN SCHOOLS PUBLISHED

General Secretary Kobayashi of the Education Association of Christian Schools (EACS) has had published an interesting research pamphlet on The History and Present Situation of Christian Schools. (in Japan)

He warns that the future of Christian schools in Japan does not warrant optimism as the government is moving toward increasing control by way of reform of the primary and secondary school curriculum and revision of the basic education law. However, Kiyoaki Murata, editor of the Japan Times, does not see in these changes the dangers that Kobayashi envisions. He notes that the Japanese youngsters will now be able to sing the national anthem and be more conscious of being Japanese. There will be at least one 45 minute moral education session during the week for the primary grades. There will be no uniform textbook as before the war, but it outlines a list of 36 moral precepts such as: respect for human life, cleanliness, justice, diligence, love of animals and plants, public morality and patriotism. The Japan Teacher's Union is violently opposed to the new curriculum.

There are at present 78 institutions related to the EACS. These include 7 post-graduate schools, 18 universities with 50 departments, 34 jr. collges, 79 sr. high schools, 65 jr, high schools and 15 primary schools, a total of 218 schools. A total student population is divided as follows: post-graduate 892, university 57,562, jr, college 10,641, sr. high school 54,571, jr. high school 32,387 and primary 4,889.

The difficulty in securing Christian teachers is shown by the comparatively low percentage of 56% Christian teachers. The universities show the lowest percentage with only 42%, the secondary schools are next with 58% and the primary schools follow with 71%. Institutions "related to" the United Church of Christ in Japan are in the majority with 52, followed by the Anglican-Episcopal Church related schools with 9.

The present total student population of Christian Schools in Japan is now 160,944, this is 1.7 times the 93,206 registered in 1951.

UCC EVANGELISM RESEARCH DEPARTMENT PUBLISHES BOOK ON CONTACT WITH NEW RELIGIONS

The United Church of Christ (UCC) Research Department has recently had a book published which deals with the problem of contact between Christianity and other religions in Japan. The responsibility for the work was undertaken by Professor Masatoshi Doi of Doshisha Theological Seminary who investigated from the standpoint of theological interpretation; Professor Yasuo Mizoguchi of Kobe Women's College who looked at the problem from the standpoints of history of religion and history of culture; and Professor Sakae Kobayashi of the theological department of Kansai Gakuin University who gave special attention to suggestions for evangelistic approaches to the new religions on the basis of surveys. These men

are all members of the Kansai division of the Evangelism Research Department of the UCC. The title of the book is "The Gospel in Japan and Contact with Other Religions" and was published Dec. 15, 1960.

The work includes research into records related to contact with other religions in the history of Christianity in Japan; a survey of the present situation of the new religions including their teaching practice and organization; and a survey of converts from other religions now in the churches of the UCC. Hiroshi Oyama, also a member of the Evangelism Research Department, notes in the Introduction that "this is perhaps the first study of its sort by Japanese themselves and for that reason has deep meaning."

Prof. Doi sums up the Japanese mentality as "lacking in a sense of the ultimate (kyukyoku ishiki no ketsubo)" which as a reference will help explain the Japanese consciousness of "shame" but not of "sin"; also, the lack of a "high evaluation of personality;" the "emotionalism" of the Japanese; and the syncretistic approach to religion. He says that syncretism has two meanings in Japan; "one is where more than two religions exist comfortably together within the same tradition;" and the second meaning is that "one person may at the same time be a believer in two or more religions," as is graphically shown in religious population statistics.

Prof. Kobayashi, in his section, notes the "strong monotheistic trends" in the new Shinto-related religions, which derive "from the Judea-Christian heritage of a creation God." The calls received by the founders of the new religions remind Kobayashi of the calls received by the O.T. prophets. They tell of the "experience of receiving revelation from the Creator of all things." Some, such as Mokichi Okada of the World Messiah movement, declare themselves to be God. In all these calls, however, the term revelation is often very unclear and used in a vague sense. Prof. Kobayashi also writes that "it is important to note that the new religions generally take a markedly optimistic view of human nature." Although there is great variance on what is considered to be man's true original nature they call for a return to this original form.

Professor Kobayashi also deals with the question of religious tolerance. He refutes those who claim that the reason for few Christians in Japan is the Christian's intolerance. He lists Sokagakkai, Tenrikyo, Omoto and others - all flourishing groups, as all claiming to be the final religion. He doubts whether we can consider their "religious vagueness" as being religious tolerance.

He also writes that "one of the most attractive points of the new religions is the personality of the founder..... Another attractive point.... is that all of them came from the masses (lower classes.) Kobayashi believes that the ordinariness of the founder's preaching was the cause for their success. The present teachers have inherited this characteristic and thus have developed a "religion for the laity."

